

FINAL DECISION DOCUMENTATION and DECISION RATIONALE

**Beck Road Oregon White Oak Restoration Demonstration Project**

Environmental Assessment Number OR080-02-12

USDI - Bureau of Land Management  
Oregon State Office, Salem District, Marys Peak Resource Area  
Sections 6, Township 6 South, Range 6 West Willamette Meridian  
Polk County, Oregon

I have reviewed the proposal and alternatives for the accomplishment of the Beck Road Oregon White Oak Restoration Demonstration project. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Marys Peak Resource Area, completed an environmental analysis (Environmental Assessment number OR-080-02-12) for a proposal to restore Oregon white oak habitat on approximately 28 acres in the Salt Creek drainage of the South Yamhill River. Activities to restore Oregon white oak habitat include release from overtopping conifers, conifer thinning, oak planting, noxious weed control and prescribed burning. Activities will occur in T. 6 S., R. 6 W., section 35, W. M. The affected environment, proposed action and potential environmental consequences of the proposed project and associated activities are described in the Beck Road Oregon White Oak Restoration Demonstration project Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were made available for public review from February 11, 2003 to March 13, 2003.

Programmatic documents covering this proposal are the:

*Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (S&M ROD, January 2001)*

*Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement For Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (S&M FSEIS, November 2000).*

*Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP, May 1995)*

*Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (ROD, April 1994)*

*Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-*

*Successional Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (SEIS, February 1994)*

*Western Oregon Program-Management of Competing Vegetation Final Environmental Impact Statement (VMFEIS, February 1989) and the Western Oregon Program-Management of Competing Vegetation Record of Decision (August 1992).*

The EA is tiered with the aforementioned environmental documents. All of these documents may be reviewed at the Salem District BLM office, Marys Peak Resource Area, 1717 Fabry Rd. S., Salem Oregon. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM, closed on holidays.

## **Decision Record**

Considering public comment, the content of the EA and supporting project record, and the management direction contained in the *RMP*, I have decided to implement the selected action as described in the EA proposed action and project design features with the following clarifications and modifications:

### Clarifications

1. Piling of fuels will be done by hand in the harvester-forwarder area to reduce soil impacts. Machine piling (hydraulic loader or shovel) would be allowed in shovel yarding area only. In the EA, the specific location for each activity was not specified.

### Modifications

1. Gates will be installed on temporary roads from the time of their construction until they are decommissioned. Restricting vehicle access from will prevent damage to the roadbed and resource damage during wet periods.
2. Page 21 states that yarding of unmerchantable material greater than 3 inches diameter, large end and 8 feet long will be allowed as a substitute measure for slash piling. The diameter was revised in the contract to 5 inches. Three inch diameter material was considered infeasible to yard to landings in a forwarder, so the diameter was increased to five inches.
3. Page 22 states that dust abatement measures would be considered on Beck Road during log hauling operations and provisions made in the timber sale contract. Beck Road is maintained by Polk County and no provisions for maintenance, including dust abatement can be made in the timber sale contract. Measures will consist of controlling the speed of log trucks as they travel Beck Road, through administration of the timber sale contract.

4. On March 14, 2003 BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2003-050 was issued, implementing the 2002 Survey and Manage Annual Species Review, including a revised Table 1-1 (Species Included in Survey and Manage Standards and Guidelines and Category Assignment). The Beck Road Oregon White Oak Restoration Demonstration project design and EA are in compliance with IM No. 2003-050 and the revised Table 1-1.

## **Decision Rationale**

My rationale for this decision follows:

1. The selected action addresses the identified purpose and need for action because it will meet the need for restoring and maintaining special forest habitats as described in the *RMP* on page 26.
2. Alternatives 1 and 3 were not selected for the following reasons:

Alternative 1 - The “no action” alternative was not selected because it would not meet *RMP* objectives for special habitats; nor would it meet the purpose and need for oak/conifer woodland restoration and demonstration.

Alternative 3 - Environmental effects between Alternative 2 and 3 are almost equal, yet under Alternative 3, the purpose and need would be met to a much lesser extent, or would require an additional entry to fully meet objectives. The interdisciplinary team determined that the environmental effects of Alternative 2 are acceptable, while meeting the purpose and need in one entry.

A FONSI was issued with the original EA. The clarifications and modifications do not change the scope of the project analyzed in EA number OR-080-02-12, and do not affect the adequacy of the analysis described in the EA. My conclusions in the FONSI have not changed.

## **Public Involvement/Coordination/Consultation**

### **Scoping**

Efforts to involve the public in planning the proposed action are discussed on page 7 of the EA.

Responses to comments received during scoping, public meetings, and project development are found in Chapter V., Consultation and Coordination, in section C. Public Participation and Comment, on page 52 of the EA.

## Comments to EA

One phone call and one letter was received from the same organization. Appendix A summarizes the substantive comments and questions and includes our responses.

## Consultation

The proposed project did not trigger Consultation under the Endangered Species Act because the proposed action and alternatives would have no effect on any listed species.

## Conclusion

As Field Manager of the Marys Peak Resource Area, I reviewed the record for this proposed project and have decided to implement Alternative 2, the proposed action as described in the EA, along with the modifications described in the Decision Record.

A Finding of No Significant Impact was signed on February 7, 2003. The conclusions reached in that document have not changed.

## Protests

In accordance with forest management regulations at 43 CFR 5003.2, the decision for this project and related timber sale will not become effective or be open to formal protest until the Notice of Sale is published "in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located." Protests of the sale must be filed within 15 days of the first publication of the notice. For this project, the Notice of Sale will be first published in the *Polk County Itemizer-Observer* on or before May 2, 2003. The planned sale date is May 28, 2003.

Protests must be addressed to the Marys Peak Resource Area Field Manager, Bureau of Land Management, 1717 Fabry Road S, Salem, Oregon, 97306. Upon receiving a timely protest, I will reconsider my decision in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information. I will prepare a written response to the protest(s) and send my response(s) to the protesting party or parties. My response(s) to the protest(s) may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals.



Cindy Enstrom  
Marys Peak Field Manager

Date 3/31/03

## APPENDIX A PUBLIC COMMENTS AND BLM RESPONSES

### Silviculture Prescription

Oregon Natural Resources Council (ONRC): *Full oak release is defined in the EA as conifer removal within the tree height of subject oak – but the prescription in the proposed action is to remove conifer within 30’ or 60’, depending on subject oak diameter. Was this based on the average “site potential” oak on the site?*

Within the study plots, the distances were based on the exact measured oak height. Elsewhere, the prescription for marking reserve trees was based on stand averages of 30’ for small oak (8” or less dbh), and 60’ on those larger than 8 inches dbh. Operationally, the precision to measure each oak height exactly was not necessary to accomplish the objective.

Oregon Natural Resources Council (ONRC): *In the half-release alternative (3), fir greater than 28 inches dbh would be retained, even those overtopping oak. Why was it not included the proposed action (alternative 2)?*

The IDT decided not to include it in the proposed action because it would constrain the primary objective of oak release, and large trees will still remain abundantly in the project area where they are not within specified distances of an oak.

Oregon Natural Resources Council (ONRC): *I am a little concerned that some of the oaks will show signs of sun-scorching due to overstory removal of the Douglas-fir canopy.*

This was initially a concern of the IDT. The project leader consulted with others who have implemented similar projects, including Connie Harrington, a leading researcher on Oregon white oak release. It appears to be very unlikely and was therefore not addressed in the EA.

### Snags and Coarse Woody Debris

ONRC: *Buffering the largest snags of different decay classes is suggested.*

The wildlife biologist, in describing the affected environment, notes that snag and coarse woody debris does not have the same role or ecological function in oak savanna or woodland habitats as in conifer habitats. Decadent live oaks are expected to someday meet the needs of cavity nesters on the site. The site currently contains very, very few snags. Snag habitat will be increased as a result of the project. Fir trees that overtop oak trees, yet cannot be safely felled, will be killed by girdling following logging operations.

ONRC: *Removal of trees that blow down in the future is analyzed in the proposed action. At what level will BLM wildlife biologist consider blowdown following the treatment to be excess?*

*Could the BLM cite a linear feet figure or similar figure during the NEPA process rather than conducting that analysis out of the public eye?*

The wildlife biologist, in describing the affected environment, notes that snag and coarse woody debris does not have the same role or ecological function in oak savanna or woodland habitats as in conifer habitats. After treatment implementation, approximately 250 lineal feet per acre of coarse woody debris will remain. Virtually any future blowdown would be considered excess for the structure and function of an oak/conifer woodland ecosystem managed with prescribed fire, but would not necessarily be salvaged. The decision to remove future blowdown would be carefully considered by the IDT, consistent with the purpose and need and resource protection features of the EA. If more than 20% of the post-treatment residual conifer blow down, additional NEPA analysis would be conducted prior to salvage.

## APPENDIX B VICINITY MAP AND PROJECT MAP

